

PIÑON BOARDING SCHOOL, DORMITORIES
(Piñon Community School, Building 316)
Navajo Route 41 North of Navajo Route 4
Piñon
Navajo County
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-162-C

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PIÑON BOARDING SCHOOL, DORMITORIES

(Piñon Community School, Building 316)

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Location:

Navajo Route 41 North of Navajo Route 4
Piñon
Navajo County
Arizona

USGS Piñon Quadrangle (7.5)
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
12.569820.3995260 (Boy's Dormitory)
12.569830.3995300 (Girl's Dormitory)

Present Owner:

Piñon Community School Board
P.O. Box 159
Piñon, Arizona 86510

Present Occupant:

Piñon Community School

Present Use:

Dormitory

Significance:

The wings of Building 316 are the two original dormitory buildings built in 1935 at the Piñon Boarding School. They were built in the Pueblo Revival Style which characterized most of the PWA reservation school buildings of that era.

The two buildings differ from the other 1935 structures by having flat overhanging roofs and random ashlar masonry walls.

PART I. DESCRIPTION

EXTERIOR. The dormitory building (316) consists of two 1935 Pueblo Revival sandstone wings to the north and to the south of a central concrete block addition built in 1956. The two wings are "L"-shaped, single story mirror images of each other. [Figs. 1,2] The random ashlar walls are constructed of native Dakota sandstone blocks. The roof is flat with overhanging eaves. The center concrete block addition is painted and has a flat, overhanging roof that is lower than the roofs on the wings.

INTERIOR. The two wings where the children slept have wood floors throughout with painted plaster walls and ceilings.

MECHANICAL. Building 316 is heated by an oil-fired hot water boiler, Well-McLain (Model #BL-586-SW). The boiler also heats domestic hot water through a heat exchanger. All mechanical equipment is located in the mechanical room of the new addition. The original mechanical systems for the 1935 buildings are unknown.

COST. According to an American Indian Engineering survey completed in 1978, the cost of the original dormitories was \$40,000.

PART II. HISTORY

The wings of the dormitory building (316) are the two original dormitories built in 1935. The south building was for boys, the north for girls. Drawings dated 1954 call the south building "311" and the north "312". [Fig. 1] (These are not to be confused with the 311 and 312 listed in the Piñon building inventory in The Navajos and the BIA.)

In 1956, the two buildings were joined by a concrete block addition which added new toilets and shower facilities, a mechanical room, and a two bedroom staff apartment. Once joined, the building became "316", dropping the previous 311 and 312 designations. [Fig. 2]

The carefully cut and dressed random ashlar walls of the two dormitories differ notably from the coursed rubble walls of the other 1935 buildings. It is probable that the dormitories were built by the more skilled white workers employed by the Civilian Conservation Corps while the other buildings were built by the more numerous local Navajo workers who were relatively unskilled. (The Navajo Civilian Conservation Corps became skilled in production and learned from the education programs quickly. By 1936, it was considered a model for all Indian CCCs.)

Vertical lines carved into the sandstone blocks are visible particularly on the north and south elevations. One long-time resident who attended school here explained how, as children, they would rub the sandstone with rocks or sticks to make very fine sand which they used to make sand paintings on the ground.

A new complex of buildings has been designed for the Piñon site*, and the center 1956 concrete block addition between the two 1935 wings is scheduled for demolition. This will return the wings to freestanding buildings as they were originally built. The boys dormitory (south wing 316) will be restored and used as a library and cultural center. The girls building (north) will be relinquished to the Navajo tribe and its fate is unknown.

*Architect: Lescher and Mahoney/DLR Group, Phoenix, AZ

PART III. SOURCES

Parman, Donald L. The Navajos and the New Deal
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976

Threinen, Ellen. 1981. The Navajos and the BIA: A Study of Government Buildings on the Navajo Reservation. American Indian Engineering, Inc./Bureau of Indian Affairs

Other possible sources:

Indians at Work. Issues published from 1934 - 1936.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This survey is a mitigative recording required by a Memorandum of Agreement signed by the following parties:

Phyllis Badoni, Executive Director
Piñon Community School Board

Tom Tippeconnic, Assistant Area Director
Navajo Area Office, Navajo Area BIA

Jim Garrison
Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

Alan Downer, Historic Preservation Officer
Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department

Robert Bush, Executive Director
Advising Council on Historic Preservation

The survey documentation was completed in July 1993 by Lescher and Mahoney/DLR Group with the cooperation of the following:

Piñon Community School Board
Bureau of Indian Affairs - Gallup Office
Bureau of Indian Affairs - Albuquerque Office
Arizona State Historic Preservation Office
Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department
David Sloan and Associates, Architects

Prepared by: Brett A. Hobza
Affiliation: Lescher and Mahoney/OLR Group, Architects Phoenix, Arizona
Date: July 1993



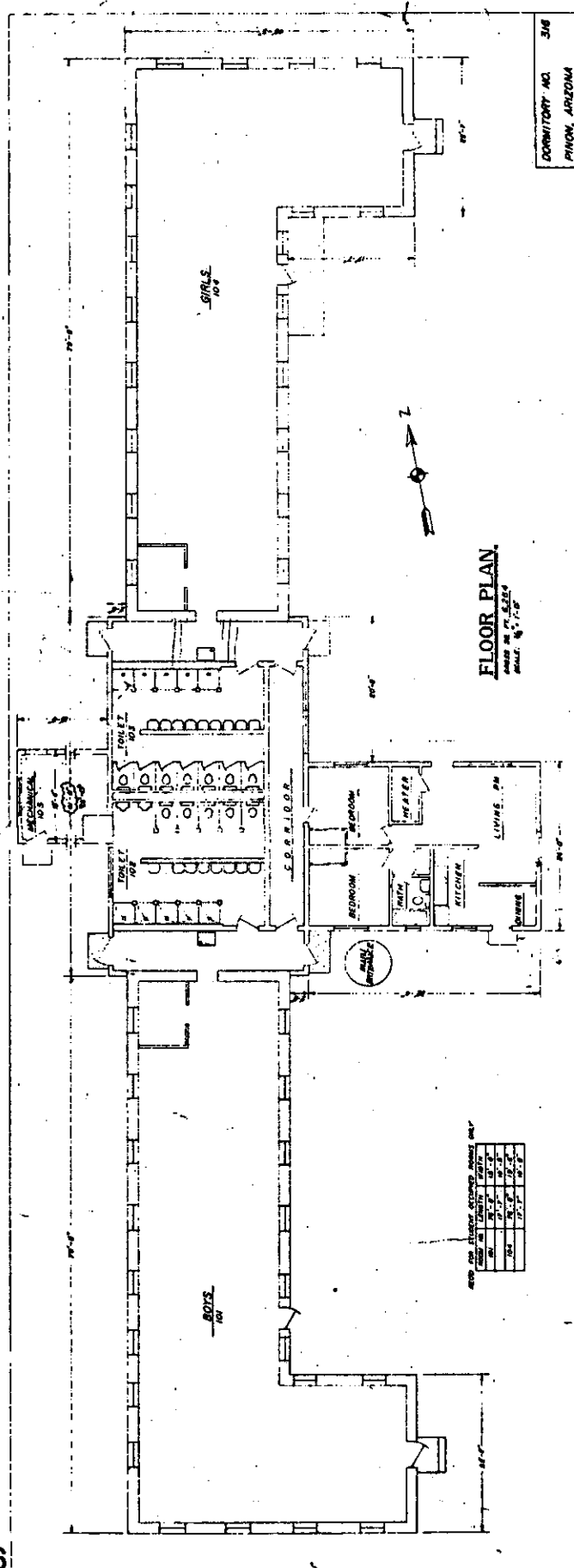


Figure 2.
 Floor Plan - Building 316

DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATION (Pages 4-5)

PINON BOARDING SCHOOL,
DORMITORIES
(Building 316)
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FIGURE 1 Photocopy of civil engineering drawing (original drawing located at Navajo Area Bureau of Indian Affairs, Window Rock, Arizona).
DETAIL OF 1954 SITE PLAN, SHEET 07.

FIGURE 2 Photocopy of drawing (original drawing located at Bureau of Indian Affairs, Gallup Office).
FLOOR PLAN OF BUILDING 316.